

Risk and Media Communication

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Risk Communication – Definition

“A Science-based Approach for Communicating Effectively in:

- ☞ High-Concern**
- ☞ High Stress**
- ☞ Emotionally Charged, or**
- ☞ Controversial Situations”**

Risk Communication Science

- **There is a large body of scientific knowledge**
- **Most of the skills involved are non-intuitive and non-instinctive and therefore must be acquired**
- **The key to success is preparedness**

Risk Communication Science

- **8000 Articles in Peer Reviewed Scientific Journals**
- **2000 Books**
- **Reviews of the Literature by Major Scientific Organizations (e.g., US National Academy of Sciences; Royal Society of Great Britain)**

2001

“...the major public health challenges since 9/11 were not just clinical, epidemiological, technical, issues. The major challenges were communication. In fact, as we move into the 21st century, communication may well become the central science of public health practice.” (December, 2001) Edward Baker, MD, MPH, Assistant Surgeon General

**“Emergency Risk
Communication CDCynergy:
A Guide to Emergency Risk
Communication Planning”**

CD ROM

Risk Communication

Do's: Examples

- **Avoid Unnecessary Negatives (No, Not, Never, Nothing, None)**
- **Speak/write clearly (AGL-4)**
- **For each issue, develop lists that represent 95% of stakeholder questions and concerns (95% Rule)**

Do's

- **Prepare answers for all anticipated stakeholder questions and concerns**

Risk Communication-

Timeline

BC
(Attention
Span)

1970's
(Risk
Per-
ception)

2001
(Science)

Risk Communication-

Timeline

BC

**(Attention
Span)**

1970's

**(Risk
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ception)**

2001

(Science)

Risk Communication

Goals

- **Shared Knowledge**
- **Trust**
- **Informed, Ethical Decision Making**

Risk Communication

- **Message**
- **Messenger**
- **Means**

Risk Communication

- **Message**
- **Messenger**
- **Means**

Messages

“When people are upset, they often have extreme difficulty:

- (1) hearing;**
- (2) understanding, and**
- (3) remembering information.”**

Implications?

Risk Communication

- **Message**
- **Messenger**
- **Means**

Messenger

- **People judge the messenger before the message**
- **People judge the messenger primarily in terms of trust**
- **Information about trust comes from non-verbal communication, verbal communication, and actions**

Risk Communication

- **Message**
- **Messenger**
- **Means**

Means

The larger and more diverse the audience, the less effective the communication.

Implications?

Overall

“Facts about the actual risk play virtually no role in public perceptions and decisions about risks, concerns, or worries. What does play a role are factors such as trust, benefits, and control.”

Implications?

Messages

“When people are upset, they often have extreme difficulty:
(1) hearing;
(2) understanding, and
(3) remembering
information.”

Implications?

Messages

- **95% Rule**
- **Rule of Three**
- **AGL-4**

Classical Research

Message Development

95% Rule

“95% of all questions and concerns that will be raised by any stakeholder in any controversy can be predicted in advance.”

Implications?

Identifying Stakeholders and Their Specific Concerns

- Historical Record (e.g., meeting documents; media reports; logs)
 - Specific
 - Related
 - General
- Subject-matter experts
- Role Playing

Categories of Concerns and Issues

- **Health issues**
- **Safety issues**
- **Economic issues, e.g.,**
 - **Property values**
 - **Housing**
 - **Employment**
 - **Tourism**
 - **Business**
- **Environmental issues**
- **Wildlife Issues**
- **Quality of life issues**
- **Legal issues**
- **Trust/Credibility issues**
- **Information/Communication/Notification issues**
- **Ethical issues**
- **Technical issues**
- **Administrative issues**
- **Process/Procedural issues**
- **Roles/Responsibility issues**
- **Historical issues**
- **Religious issues**
- **Responsiveness issues**
- **Educational issues**
- **Psychological issues**
- **Policy Issues**
- **Ethnic/Diversity issues**
- **Cultural issues**
- **Fairness/Equity issues**
- **Recreational Issues**
- **Political issues**
- **Pet issues**

Concerns –Risk Perception

Lower Perceived Risk

1. Trustworthy sources
2. Substantial benefits
3. Voluntary
4. Controllable
5. Fair/equitable
6. Natural origin
7. Familiar
8. Not dreaded
9. Certain
10. Children not as victims

Higher Perceived Risk

- Untrustworthy sources
- Few benefits
- Involuntary
- Not controllable
- Unfair/inequitable
- Human origin (man made)
- Unfamiliar/exotic
- Dreaded
- Uncertain
- Children as victims

- **95% Rule**
- **Rule of Three**
- **AGL-4**

Classical (BC) Research Results:

Rule of Three Template

- **3 Messages Repeated 3 Times**

Classical (BC) Research Results:

Rule of Three Template

Message Maps

**(Layered/Tiered Triplet
Messages)**

Message Map

Stakeholder:

Question/Concern:

Key Message/Fact

1.

Key Message/Fact

2.

Key Message/Fact

3.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 1.1

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 2.1

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 3.1

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 1.2

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 2.2

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 3.2

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 1.3

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 2.3

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 3.3

Message Map
Stakeholder:
Question/Concern

Key Message/Fact

1.

I came

Key Message/Fact

2.

I saw

Key Message/Fact

3.

I conquered

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 1.1

Long
journey

The journey
was long and
hard.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 2.1

Large
armies

The enemy
armies were
large.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 3.1

Engage

We engaged
them
immediately

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 1.2

Heavy
Losses

We suffered
heavy losses
along the way.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 2.2

Well
armed

They were well
Armed and
equipped.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 3.2

Fought
bravely

Our legions
fought bravely

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 1.3

Arrived
safely

Despite the
difficulties, we
arrived safely.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 2.3

Well
positioned

They were well
positioned.

Keywords:
Supporting
Fact 3

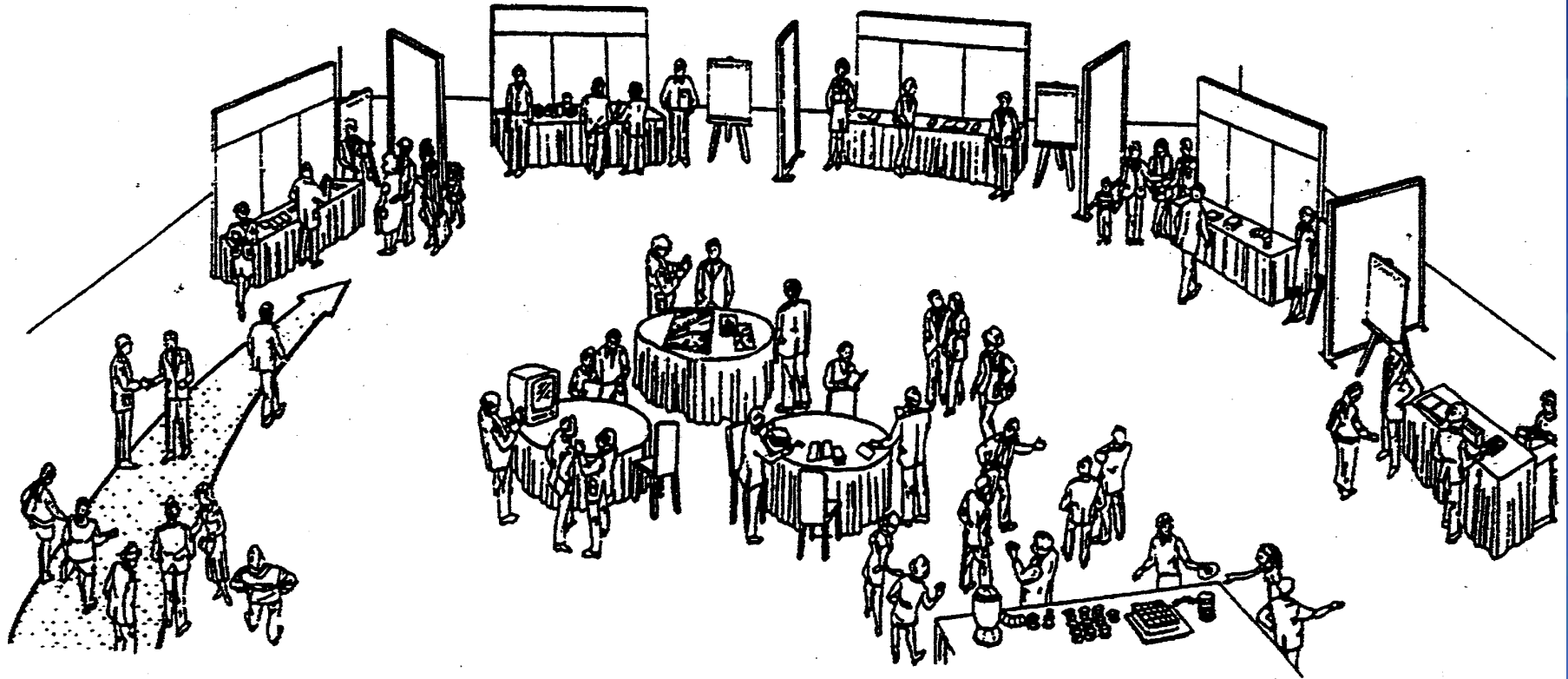
Defeated
enemy

The enemy is
(totally)
defeated.

Message Maps: Uses

- **Information Forums**
- **Fact Sheets**
- **Press Releases**
- **Video Scripts**
- **Scripts for Hot Lines**
- **Web sites**

Information Forum



From: *Risk Communication PowerPoint Slides*, Vincent T. Covello, Ph.D., Director,
Center for Risk Communication/Consortium for Risk and Crisis Communication

Classical (BC) Research Results:

Rule of Three Template

- **3 Messages **Repeated** 3 Times**
 - **TTT**
 - **Formats (e.g., written, visual)**
 - **Channels (e.g., fact sheets, web site, video)**

Overarching Message Map (O Map)

- Addresses:
 - What should people know about “x”
 - What you want them to know about “x” regardless of questions asked
 - What you would put in your opening statement about “x”
- Be sure it gets delivered
 - “Bridge” to it if necessary: e.g., “I want to remind you again...”
- Serves as a “A port in a storm”

- **95% Rule**
- **Rule of Three**
- **AGL-4**

AGL-4 Template (Message Clarity Rule)

Average Grade Level Minus 4

Exceptions:

- Words that are defined in clear language**
- Words that would be well understood by the target audience**

Templates

1) AGL-4

2) CCO

3) 27/9/3

4) IDK

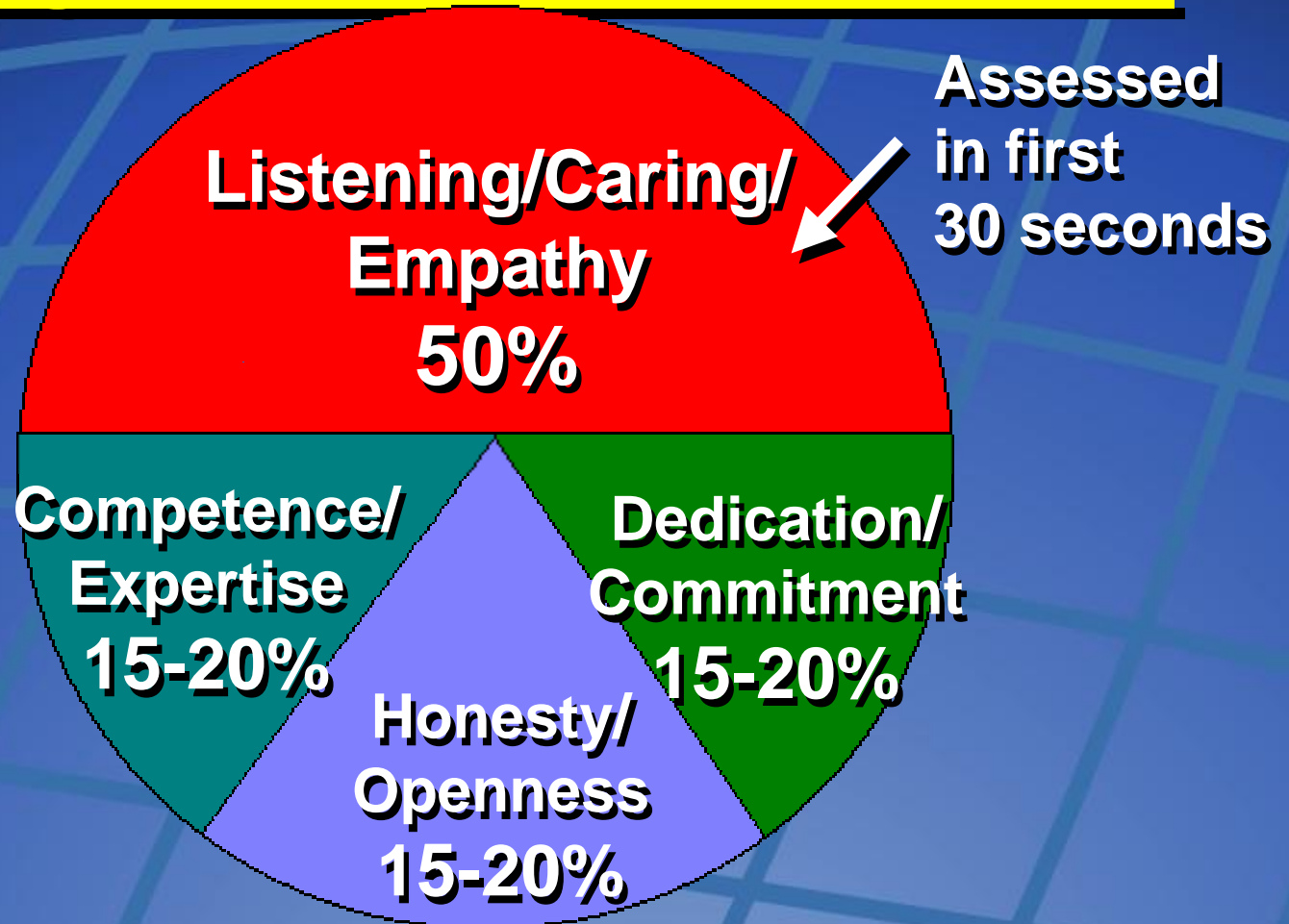
5) ...

6) ...

Message Templates:

CCO Template

Trust Factors In High Concern Situations



CCO Template (Churchill)

- **Compassion**
- **Conviction**
- **Optimism**

Templates

1) AGL-4

2) CCO

3) **27/9/3**

4) IDK

5) ...

6) ...

27/9/3 Template

- **27 words**
- **9 seconds**
- **3 messages**

Exceptions

- **Definitions (6-10 additional words)**
- **Names of Organizations (count as one word)**
- **Phrases (count as one word)**

Risk Communication

2x Enhancements (doubles the time or space) to 27/9/3's

- Visuals**
- Story telling**
- Message Support from Credible 3rd Parties**

Templates

1) **AGL-4**

2) **CCO**

3) **27/9/3**

4) **IDK**

5) **...**

6) **...**

I.D.K. (I Don't Know) Template:

Short Form

- ☞ **Say You Don't Know/Can't Answer/**Wish You Could Answer*****
- ☞ **Give the Reason Why You Don't Know or Can't Answer***
- ☞ **Indicate Follow Up with Deadline***

I.D.K. (I Don't Know) Template:

Uses



You are not prepared to answer



You are not the expert



You are not the responsible party



**You don't have information or data
(e.g., it is being investigated)**



**You are limited in what can say (e.g.,
(national security; litigation; privacy)**

I.D.K. (I Don't Know) Template:

Short Form


- ☞ **Say You Don't Know/Can't Answer/**Wish You Could Answer*****
- ☞ **Give the Reason Why You Don't Know or Can't Answer***
- ☞ **Indicate Follow Up with Deadline***

I.D.K. (I Don't Know) Template

 **Acknowledge/Repeat the Question**

 **Say You Don't Know/Can't**

Answer/Wish You Could Answer*

 **Give the Reason(s) Why You Don't Know or Can't Answer***

 **Indicate Follow Up with Deadline***

 **Bridge to What You Can Say**

Non-Verbal Communication

- **75% Rule**
- **Negative Dominance**
- **Cultural Meaning**

Research

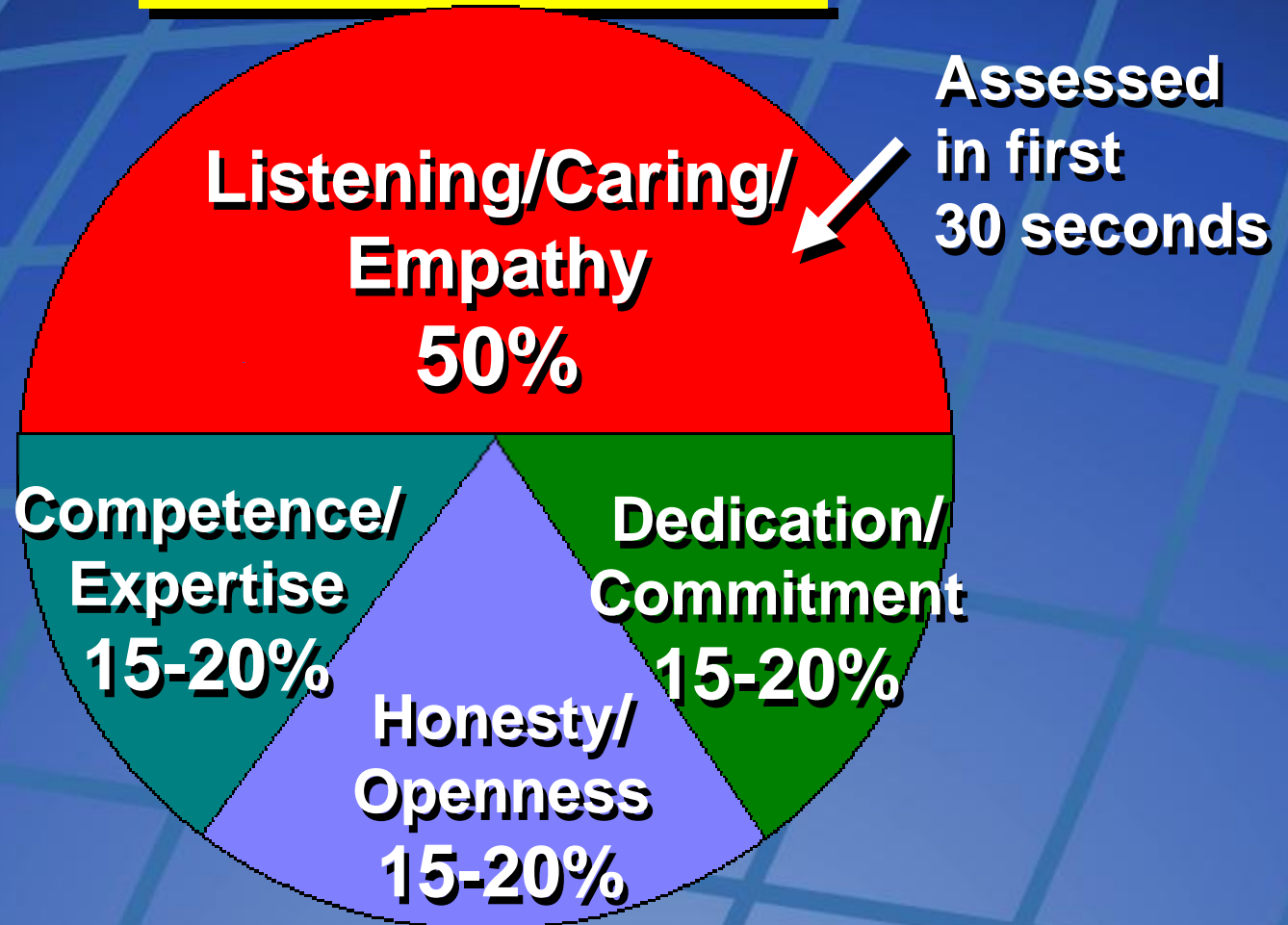
75% Rule

- **People judge the messenger before the message**
- **People judge the messenger primarily in terms of trust**
- **75% or more of information about trust comes from non-verbal communication**

- **75 % Rule**

Classical (BC) Research Results:

Trust Factors



Trust

Non-Verbal Communication

- **75% Rule**
- **Negative Dominance**
- **Cultural Meaning**

Risk Communication-

Non-Verbal Communication

- **Eyes**
- **Hands**
- **Posture**

Risk Communication-

Non-Verbal Communication

- **Eyes**
 - **Eye contact**
- **Hands**
 - **Visible; waist level; small movements**
- **Posture**
 - **Slight lean forward; relaxed; avoid repetitive motions**

Risk Communication-

Timeline

BC
(Attention
Span)

1970's
(Risk
Per-
ception)

2001
(Science)

Risk Communication-

1970's: Research Results

- **Risk Perceptions**
- **Negative Dominance**

Risk Communication-

1970's: Research Results

- **Risk Perceptions**
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1970's: Research Results

“Facts about the actual risk play virtually no role in public perceptions and decisions about risks, concerns, or worries. What does play a role are factors such as trust, benefits, and control.”

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Concerns –Risk Perception

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- Dreaded
- Uncertain
- Children as victims

Concerns – Risk Perception

Lower Perceived Risk

- 11. Not memorable
- 12. Moral/ethical
- 13. Clear non-verbal message
- 14. Responsive
- 15. Random/scattered
- 16. Little media attention
- 17. Victims statistical
- 18. Immediate effects
- 19. Effect reversible
- 20. Scientifically well understood

Higher Perceived Risk

- Memorable
- Immoral/unethical
- Mixed non-verbal message
- Unresponsive
- Catastrophic
- Much media attention
- Victims identifiable
- Delayed effects
- Effect irreversible
- Non scientifically well understood

Concerns - Risk Perception

Amplification Weights

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Trust.....	2000
Control.....	1000
Benefits	1000

Risk Communication-

1970's: Research Results

- **Risk Perceptions**
- **Negative Dominance**

1970's: Research Results

Negative Dominance

$$1N = 3P$$

Risk Communication-

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Risk Communication-

2001

- **Science**
- **Templates**
- **Stakeholders**

Risk Communication-

2001

- **Science**
- **Templates**
- **Stakeholders**

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Risk Communication Science

- **Literature Reviews/Knowledge Compendiums**
- **Performance Standards/Best Practice**
- **Performance Accountability**

Strategy—First Steps

Step 1

- 1) Identify Concerns/Issues**
- 2) Identify/Profile Stakeholders**
- 3) Identify Questions/Concerns**

Step 2

- 1) Develop Messages**
- 2) Coordinate Messages**
- 3) Identify and Train Spokespeople**

Risk Communication-

2001

- **Science**
- **Templates**
- **Stakeholders**

Templates

1) AGL-4

2) 27/9/3

3) IDK

4) CCO

5) $1N = 3P$

6) Primacy/Recency

Additional Templates

- **Guarantee Template**
- **False Allegation Template**
- **Worst Case Template**

Guarantee Template

Do:

- **Talk about what you can factually guarantee, promise, assure, or tell**
- **Tell people three factual things**
- **Focus on factual processes, procedures, or actions; not outcomes**

Avoid:

- **Saying that “there are no guarantees” or that “there are guarantees.”**

Guarantee Template

Long Form

“You’ve asked me about the future.”

“The best way I can talk about the future is to talk about the past and present.”

“What the past and present tell us is...(tell people three things)”

Additional Templates

- **Guarantee Template**
- **False Allegation Template**
- **Worst Case Template**

False Allegation Template

- ➡ Identify, acknowledge, and state the **opposite** of the false allegation
- ➡ Validate/affirm the opposite of the allegation
- ➡ Indicate three things that you have, are, or will do to maximize/achieve the opposite of the allegation

False Allegation Template:

Do: Do talk about, who you are, what you are, or what you are doing.

Avoid: Repeating false negatives or talking about who you are not, what you are not, or what you are not doing.

Additional Templates

- **Guarantee Template**
- **False Allegation**
- **Worst Case Template**

Worst Case Template



State that the question is a “What if” question.



Indicate that that it is generally more useful to focus on “What is”



**Indicate three facts that respond to the concern, e.g.,
(1) emergency response;
(2) containment; (3) prevention.**

Risk and Change Management **Communication – Definition**

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Communicating Effectively in:**

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